

Security Information

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6 November 1952

OGC Has Reviewed

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: TASS News Agency

1. TASS News Agency, Rockefeller Center, New York City, is the American Bureau of the Telegraph Agency of the USSR. There is a sub-bureau in Washington in the National Press Building. TASS itself is the central information gathering organization of the USSR. It owes its existence to and is under the direction of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. According to the resolutions of that Council it "enjoys all the rights of a juridical party" and retains "all authors' rights on all information distributed by (it) through all means of communication."

2. On April 17, 1944 TASS New York filed with the Department of Justice Registration Statement (#464) as the agent of a foreign principal as required by the Foreign Agent Registration Act of June 8, 1938 as amended (52 Stat. 631 amended by Act of August 7, 1939, 53 Stat. 144, 22 USCA § 601). The registration statement was signed by one Vladimir Pravdin, then manager, and stated among other things "the Telegraph Agency of the USSR is the central information organ of the USSR and is under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. The New York Bureau is one of its correspondent bureaus and Vladimir Pravdin is manager of that bureau." To this same registration statement was attached a certificate by the Consul General of the USSR at New York City stating "upon the instructions of the Ambassador of the USSR in the United States, certified that Vladimir S. Pravdin is an agent of such government."

3. The registration statement to which reference has been made was a statement filed "in lieu of public registration statement" as a result of application to the USSR of what is known as a "Section 3(f) exemption". Section 3(f) of the Act exempted from the filing of the usual public statement "any person or employee of such person whose foreign principal is a government of a foreign country the defense of which the President deems vital to the defense of the United States," and the President had issued the appropriate proclamation declaring that the defense of the USSR was deemed vital to the defense of the United States.

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4. With the end of the war and upon withdrawal of the President's certification in favor of the USSR under the Act TASS New York filed a new public registration statement. This was filed June 3, 1947. It gave the name and address of TASS' foreign principal as "Telegraph Agency of the USSR, 10 Tverskoy Blvd., Moscow, USSR." Attached to the registration statement as an exhibit was a statement as follows:

"The New York Bureau of Tass, including its sub-bureau in Washington is one of the foreign bureaus of the Telegraph Agency of the USSR (TASS). The regulations regarding the function and the responsibilities of the latter were defined by official decree of the Soviet Government on January 15, 1935. 'The Decision of the Central Executive Committee and Council of the People's Commissars of the USSR on the ratification of the regulations concerning the Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republics.' These regulations contain a provision regarding organization of correspondent bureaus and branches of TASS in foreign countries and sending special correspondents abroad.

"Herewith are the pertinent sections of the 'Regulations for the Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republic'

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR (TASS) is the central information organ of the USSR and is under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR is charged with the gathering and distribution throughout the USSR and abroad of political, economic and all other news of general interest concerning both the USSR and foreign states.

"In addition, the Telegraph Agency of the USSR is charged with the gathering and distribution of republican information within the boundaries of the USSR . . .

"In order to gather information the Telegraph Agency of the USSR:

Organizes a network of its correspondent bureaus and branches in the USSR to be directly subordinate to the agency.

Organizes in the union republics a network of correspondent bureaus of union significance which form a part of the system of the republican telegraph agencies, and appoints

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correspondents for them from among the candidates proposed by the telegraph agencies of the republic.

Sends, in accordance with necessity, its own special correspondents throughout the USSR.

Organizes correspondent bureaus and branches in foreign countries and sends special correspondents abroad.

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR is headed by the managing director who has two assistants.

"The managing director of the Telegraph Agency of the USSR on the basis of single management directs all the activities of the Telegraph Agency of the USSR.

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republics function on the self-paying basis.

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republics are paid for the information and other material which they distribute through the medium of all means of communication at the rates established by a special decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republics enjoy all authors' rights on information distributed by them through all means of communication in accordance with the existing copyright law.

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republics enjoy all the rights of a juridical policy."

"Also enclosed is a copy of the English translation of the 'Decision of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of the People's Commissars of the USSR' of January 15, 1935, ratifying the Regulations quoted on page 1 and 2."

Attached also to the registration statement of TASS of June 3, 1947 is the following which is referred to as "exhibit B(1)."

"Decision

of the Central Executive Committee and Council of the People's Commissars of the USSR, on the Ratification of Regulations concerning the Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republics.

The Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR have decided:

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- 1) To ratify the regulations concerning the Telegraph Agency of the USSR and the Telegraph Agencies of the Union Republics.
- 2) To abolish the regulations on the Telegraph Agency of the USSR ratified by the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on July 10, 1925 (See Law Gazette of the USSR of 1925 no. 43 page 323; 1926 no. 76, page 604; 1930 no. 32 page 349, clause 1).

Chairman of the Central Executive
Committee of the USSR

M. Kalinin

(Other signatures)

Moscow, Kremlin
January 15, 1935"

5. On June 6, 1939 at the time when statements of foreign agents were required to be filed with the Department of State the manager of TASS New York filed a registration statement which said among other things that TASS New York does not offer news for sale for distribution in the United States.

6. The Foreign Agent Registration Section of the Department of Justice has made two examinations of the books and records of TASS New York. The first was made in November 1937 and the report of that investigation is identified as: "Report of Special Agent George E. Hanlon made at New York November 13, 1947, Subject: TASS News Agency." The second examination was made in 1951 and is identified as "Report of Special Agent Howard F. Wallace, Jr., December 1, 1951, New York, New York, Re: TASS News Agency Internal Security Registration Act.

7. An English Court has held that a suit for libel may not be maintained against TASS since that Agency is an organ of USSR and is not amenable to the jurisdiction of the Courts of England. *Kajina v. TASS Agency*, London Times, 28 June 1949. Law Report June 27; Office of General Counsel file 621 "Copy-right Libel."

8. The registration statements and the two reports of examination of the books and records of TASS, above referred to, are in the possession of Mr. Nathan E. Lenvin, Assistant Chief of the Foreign Agent Registration Section, Department of Justice, room 606, Old Post Office Building, code 197, branch 271. Mr. Lenvin has advised that he believes copies of this material would be made available to this Agency if requests were made.

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